

**Record of Decision**  
USDA Forest Service

**Santa Fe National Forest**  
Land and Resource Management Plan  
Environmental Impact Statement

Mora, San Miguel, Santa Fe, Sandoval, Los Alamos, and Rio Arriba Counties, New Mexico

**INTRODUCTION**

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This Record of Decision documents my decision approving a land and resource management plan for the Santa Fe National Forest for the next 10 to 15 years. The Forest Plan will normally be revised in 10 years but must be revised in 15 years. Revision means the entire planning process will be repeated and a completely new plan will be prepared.

This Record of Decision describes alternatives considered and rationale for the selected alternative. The environmentally preferred alternative and the most economically efficient alternative are identified. In addition, proposals for Wilderness Boundary adjustments are described; and recommendations for including portions of three rivers into Wild and Scenic River classification categories.

**DECISION**

I have selected the Proposed Action Alternative for management of the Santa Fe National Forest for the next 10 to 15 years.

When compared to present management plans, the Forest Plan will:

- Place more emphasis on recreation, wildlife, watershed, and cultural resources.
- Rehabilitate 21 developed recreation sites. Construct six new sites and 20 trailheads to meet demands during the plan period.
- Construct or Reconstruct 16 miles per year of Forest trails, as opposed to an average of two per year over the past decade.
- Perform trail maintenance on 525 miles of trail per year. Current level is about 150 miles per year.

- Improve developed and dispersed recreation opportunities through rehabilitation of existing sites, increased opportunities at new sites, and higher levels of operation, maintenance, and law enforcement.
- Manage 161,851 acres of unroaded areas for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities.
- Manage 270,000 acres with emphasis on cultural resources while providing protection for all cultural resources on the National Forest.
- Designated a management area of 37,920 acres to protect and manage for cultural resources and to recognize the uniqueness of Native American religious sites.
- Provide additional protection of wilderness values and increased wilderness recreation opportunities in heavily used and sensitive ecosystems.
- Provide special management emphasis for Threatened and Endangered species of plants and animals on 19,275 acres. Manage these habitats with an objective of removing these species from the threatened and endangered lists.
- Increase old growth management areas from 10% of all forested acres to 15% of all forested acres.
- Construct fewer new roads by emphasizing reconstruction and use of existing roads.
- Eliminate 66 miles of unneeded roads each year.
- Reduce open roads on the Forest to protect watersheds and wildlife habitat.
- Accelerate rangeland improvement by developing range allotment plans which will balance capacity with use.
- Authorizes 4 demonstration timber sales on slopes greater than 40 percent. These sales will include about 15 million board feet of timber over the next ten years which will use "skyline" yarding equipment. The purpose of these sales is to demonstrate the technology and determine the impact of skyline logging on resource management on the Santa Fe National Forest.

- Decrease the sawtimber sale quantity for the planning period from proposed sale levels in both the Draft EIS and the current Timber Management Plan. The Final Plan authorizes an average annual sell of 39.0 MMBF of sawtimber and an annual average sell of 6.5 MMBF of other forest products; for a total allowable sale quantity during the plan period of 455 MMBF.
- Accelerate improvement of Forest-wide watershed conditions.
- Survey and improve the condition of riparian habitats.
- Recommend portions of the Chama, Pecos, and East Fork of the Jemez rivers for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system.
- Propose Ladrones Mesa and Canada Bonito as Research Natural Areas.
- Identify and evaluate additional Research Natural Areas and other potential Special Interest Area needs.
- Establish a Special Interest Area which contains Canadian Dogwood in the drainage of the East Fork Jemez River. These plants are thought to represent the extreme southern range of the Species.
- Propose two areas totaling 2,138 acres adjacent to the Northeast portion of the Pecos Wilderness for wilderness designation. These parcels of land were acquired by the "Trust for Public Lands" and were donated to the Forest Service. The land areas have been called the Grace Tract and the Enchanted Lakes Tract. Both parcels were attained subsequent to the "RARE" process and have not been previously considered for wilderness designation. Both parcels qualify for wilderness designation and will be recommended to become part of the Pecos Wilderness.

This alternative will provide quality on-the-ground resource management, protection, and public service on the Santa Fe National Forest. Selection of this alternative which emphasizes recreation opportunities, a comprehensive cultural resource management program, protection of wildlife habitat, and watershed conditions; while maintaining a viable timber sales program is appropriate for the desired uses and needs of the Santa Fe National Forest.

The Forest Plan provides management direction for the Santa Fe National Forest for the next 10-15 years. Direction is provided through a mission statement, goals, objectives, multiple use prescriptions, and standards and guidelines. The Forest Plan contains sufficient detail to plan and carry out program level decisions. Additional environmental analysis, documentation, and public involvement will be done on site specific project

proposals. No decisions for use of land or resources beyond the 10-15 year life of the plan have been made. The Plan does not address administrative operations such as personnel matters, purchasing, or organizational changes.

## **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN DETAIL**

### **Alternative PA**

Resolves major issues and management concerns with a mix of both market and nonmarket uses, outputs, and aesthetic values. Emphasis is on improving conditions of all basic resources with a high degree of issue resolution.

### **Alternative 2**

Strives to meet Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA) objectives assigned in the Regional Guide. Issue resolution is directed more towards National and Regional concerns than local issues.

### **Alternative 3 - No Action Alternative**

Evaluates the effects of continuing current resource management direction and is consistent with existing management plans, policies, standards, and guidelines. This is the No Action Alternative required by the National Environmental Policy Act regulations.

### **Alternative 4**

Emphasizes market opportunities. The alternative was developed with an emphasis on sawtimber, green firewood, livestock use and developed fee recreation sites, all of which have market benefit values.

### **Alternative 5**

Emphasizes resource outputs with nonmarket values. It was developed with an emphasis on protection and enhancement of recreation, visual quality, cultural resources, watershed condition, and wildlife.

### **Alternative 6**

Emphasizes reduced budgets. Management practices occur at a minimal level consistent with a budget 25% below 1984 levels. Outputs reflect the overall low level of activity.

### **Alternatives Considered, But Eliminated From Detailed Study**

A number of alternatives were considered but eliminated from detail study. Some were developed to determine effects of constraints and interrelationships of resource uses. Others determined the capacity to produce individual resources.

These alternatives and the reasons for eliminating them from detailed study are discussed in Chapter 2 of the Environmental Impact Statement.

### **REASONS FOR DECISION**

My decision is based on evaluation to determine which alternative provides quality on-the-ground resource management, protection, and public service while maximizing net public benefits. Net public benefits are the long-term benefits less costs and are measured by both quantitative and qualitative criteria rather than a single measure or index.

Net public benefits and the quality of on-the-ground management were determined by evaluating how well each alternative responded to issues, by weighing environmental consequences, assessing budget requirements, and considering public comments.

The Proposed Action Alternative is selected because it provides the highest level of issue resolution from an integrated environmental, economic, and social perspective. Economically, it ranks second in efficiency when both market and nonmarket values are taken into consideration; and is the most environmentally preferred alternative. The selected alternative provides a balanced program within a realistic budget level and therefore, maximizes net public benefits. It best balances competing resources, needs, and public desires.

### **Issue Resolution**

Although all of the alternatives provide multiple use benefits while protecting or enhancing environmental quality, issues are treated differently in each alternative and each alternative resulted in varying degrees of issue resolution.

The selected alternative resolves more issues satisfactorily than any other alternative. The issue resolution of the selected alternative (PA) compared to all other alternatives in the following table:

	Alternative Issue Resolution Ranking					
	Highest					Lowest
Recreation	5	PA	2	4	3	6
ORV	PA	5	2	3	4	6
Visual Quality	5	PA	6	3	2	4
Cultural Resources	5	PA	2	4	3	6
Wildlife	5	PA	3	2	6	4
Wildlife Habitat Diversity	PA	6	5	3	2	4
Range	PA	4	3	2	5	6
Timber	2	4	3	PA	5	6
Firewood	4	PA	3	2	5	6
Watershed	5	PA	2	4	3	6
Santa Fe Watershed	PA	2	3	6	4	5
Transportation	PA	2	5	4	3	6
Research Natural Areas	PA	2	5	3	4	6

This table displays the ranking of all alternatives on issue resolution. The selected alternative (PA) ranks the highest in resolving six issues. It ranks second best for resolving six issues and is ranked fourth in resolving another issue. No other alternative has the consistently high ranking in issue resolution as the preferred alternative.

#### **Most Economically Efficient Alternative**

Alternative 5 has the highest present net value (PNV) and is the economically preferable alternative.

Alternative PA ranks second in PNV. Alternative PA produces less recreation than Alternative 5 resulting in lower marginal benefits. However, Alternative PA was selected because it better addresses the issues and is environmentally preferable.

#### **Environmentally Preferred Alternative**

The selected alternative (PA) is environmentally preferred because it best:

- Produces vegetation diversity over time
- Provides the best mix of habitats for the management of wildlife species.
- Obliterates and closes the existing roads reducing erosion and conflicts between human activities and wildlife needs.

- Protects scenic backdrops and areas viewed close-up from high use roads, trails, use areas and communities.
- Protects and enhances known habitat for identified threatened, endangered or sensitive plant and animal species.
- Improves the condition and maintains the health of riparian areas and watersheds.
- Protects soil conditions and watersheds.

## **RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS**

The Forest received over 2,000 written comments, in the form of petitions, form letters, coupons, and from a formal public hearing on the Draft Santa Fe Environmental Impact Statement and Forest Plan. Others expressed their concerns during 9 open houses and approximately 70 meetings and informal working sessions. The concerns expressed, both in writing and during these work sessions, covered the range of issues covered in the EIS. The views often expressed opposite opinions of how the Forest should be managed.

A complete summary of changes which resulted from the public involvement is in the Public Comments and Forest Services Responses document for the EIS and Forest Plan. A brief overview of these changes follow:

- Increased trail construction and reconstruction management activities.
- Increased Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized management areas.
- Additional rivers being recommended for inclusion into the Wild and Scenic Rivers System.
- Recommendations for increases in the Pecos Wilderness through boundary adjustments.
- Increased emphasis in cultural resource management, including the addition of a separate management area which precludes major ground disturbing activities.
- Reduced acres allocated to timber production.
- Reduced allowable sale quantity (ASQ).
- Reduced skyline logging.

- Included a small sales component in the timber sales program for small timber operators with limited harvesting capacity.
- Reduced amount of clearcutting.
- Increased old growth retention and uneven-aged silvicultural management.
- Increased emphasis on Threatened and Endangered Species and non-game animals.
- Reduced time for balancing grazing use with capacity.
- Added a management area specifically for the Gallinas Watershed. A watershed management plan for the watershed will be cooperatively developed by the City of Las Vegas and the Forest Service.
- Increased levels of watershed protection and monitoring requirements.
- Increased amount of road closures and road obliteration.
- Strengthened the monitoring section.

Numerous technical corrections and other suggestions to make the documents easier to read were also incorporated into the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Forest Plan. Detailed documentation can be found in the Public Comment and Forest Service Response document.

## **MITIGATION**

Mitigation requirements for maintenance and enhancement of environmental quality are incorporated into the standards and guidelines in the Forest Plan.

- Recreation opportunities are provided with levels of service appropriate to the type and extent of use expected. Standards and guidelines will protect soil, water, vegetation, and wildlife resources.
- Visual quality is provided through the Visual Management System. Additional standards and guidelines provide direction to maintain or enhance visual quality as an integral part of other activities such as timber harvesting and road construction.



- Management and protection of cultural resources is assured through standards and guidelines that provide compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act, and for coordination with State historic preservation planning. The Forest Plan also provides for Native American religious use and consultation.
- Improved wildlife habitat will be achieved through integration with other resource activities and habitat improvements. Viable populations of all native vertebrate species will be maintained. Habitats for State and Federally listed threatened, endangered, and sensitive species will be managed with the goal of removing these species from their respective listings.
- Insect and disease conditions will be monitored on a continuing basis. Integrated forest protection methods will be used for prevention and control of insects and diseases as appropriate.
- Watershed protection and enhancement are provided through "Best Management Practices" and cooperative balancing of livestock grazing with range carrying capacity.
- Minerals and oil and gas activities will be managed through approved plans of operation insuring environmental and other resource needs are protected while developing needed mineral resources.
- Standards and guidelines are included for the management of wilderness areas and special areas recommended in the Forest Plan.

## **MONITORING**

Implementation of the Forest Plan will be monitored as described in Chapter 5. The purposes of monitoring are to evaluate whether the Forest mission, goals and objectives are being realized and to determine how well management standards and guidelines have been applied. At specified intervals monitoring results will be evaluated. The results of monitoring and evaluation will measure progress on implementation, insure adherence to the Standards and Guidelines, and will determine when amendments or revisions are needed.

Management of the skyline demonstration sales will be of particular interest. A separate monitoring team will be formed to track the progress and appropriateness of this method of logging. The findings of this group will be evaluated during the next planning period to determine the appropriateness of this technique on the Santa Fe National Forest in northern New Mexico.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Continued public participation will be encouraged during plan implementation. Environmental analysis of site specific projects and monitoring activities will provide opportunities for public participation. Watershed condition, riparian condition, range condition, timber sales, recreation projects, and wildlife habitat are expected to receive a high level of public interest.

All other management activities will be closely evaluated through the established monitoring programs. We will encourage active participation during the implementation of all programs. The environmental analyses conducted for site specific timber sales will provide opportunities for all interested parties to participate. Individual sales will be evaluated based on expected costs and revenues and achievement of other multiple-use objectives. Individual timber sales may be sold where projected costs exceed projected revenues when necessary to meet other multiple use objectives. Efforts will be made to reduce timber program costs through such measures as shared services, contracting, and implementation of integrated stand management principles.

The allowable sale quantity of timber (the quantity of timber that may be sold from the land suitable for timber production) averaged 8.8 million cubic feet (45.5 MMBF) per year. The sawtimber portion of the annual allowable sale quantity (ASQ) averages 39.0 million board feet of which 2.5 million board feet is for a small sales program and 1.5 million board feet is for a "Skyline" demonstration program. The small roundwood portion of the ASQ averages 6.5 million board feet per year.

The planned timber sales level is adequate for presently anticipated demand. There are approximately 105,482 acres of tentatively suitable timber land which were classified as "not appropriate" for timber production. These lands are mostly steep lands which would require skyline timber harvest methods. If anticipated demand changes and with successful demonstration of the scheduled 1.5 MMBF per year skyline timber sales, approximately 7 MMBF of additional timber could be sold from these lands. Appropriate amendment of the Forest Plan and public notification would be required.

Timber sales which were scheduled for sale during fiscal year 1987 and were delayed because of appeals will not be counted in the planned ASQ if they are subsequently sold after the plan is in effect.

The utility corridor identified in the September 26, 1986, Record of Decision for the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Ojo Line Extension 345KV Overhead Transmission and Substation Project has been incorporated in the final Forest Plan. A permit for the Ojo Line will be issued in accordance with the September 26, 1986, decision as soon as legal challenges to that decision have been settled.

The budget for the Santa Fe Forest Plan is an estimated annual average budget for the 10-15 year life of the Plan. It is made up of broad averages and annual investment initiatives. Annual budget requests will be based on the Forest Plan. However, if appropriations are less than requested, modified rates of implementation and additional operating efficiencies will be examined so that planned on-the-ground results will be achieved. Individual projects will be evaluated based on expected costs and revenues and achievement of multiple use objectives prescribed in the Forest Plan. Individual projects may be implemented where projected costs exceed projected revenues when necessary to meet multiple use objectives as established by the direction in the Forest Plan.

The Forest Plan will become effective 30 days after the Notice of Availability of the Environmental Impact Statement appears in the **Federal Register**. The time needed to bring all activities into compliance with the Forest Plan will vary. Most operation and maintenance activities, projects in the first year of development, new special use proposals, and transfers of existing permits can be brought into compliance with the Forest Plan the first year of implementation.

Existing projects as well as contractual obligations will continue as planned. As soon as practicable after approval of the Forest Plan, the Forest Supervisor will ensure that, subject to valid existing rights, all outstanding agreements and other instruments for occupancy and use of affected lands are consistent with the Forest Plan. Subsequent administrative activities affecting such lands, including budget proposals, shall be based on the Forest Plan. The Forest Supervisor may change proposed implementation schedules to reflect differences between proposed annual budgets and appropriated funds. Such scheduled changes shall not be considered a significant amendment to the Forest Plan. Changes significantly altering the long-term relationship between levels of multiple use goods and services compared to those projected under actual appropriations may be significant amendments.

## **FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT**

During the period of this Forest plan, market condition or resource use demands can change. Opportunities brought about by these changes can be incorporated in the forest Plan through amendments. For example, if markets and subsequent demand for wood products were to increase, the Forest Supervisor may amend the Forest Plan. It may be determined that an increase in the allowable sale quantity for the 10 to 15-year duration of the Forest Plan would be possible within the direction of the Forest Plan. Such an increase could require scheduling additional land suitable for timber production. A change in a standard for a management area could likewise require Forest Plan amendment. If a change resulting from the amendment is not significant for the purposes of the planning process, the Forest Supervisor may implement the amendment following appropriate public notification and satisfactory completion of NEPA procedures. After appropriate public notification, the Forest Supervisor shall follow the same procedure as that required for the development and approval of the Forest Plan.

## **APPEAL RIGHTS**

This decision, except for wilderness recommendations, is subject to administrative review in accordance with the provisions of 36 CFR 211.18. Notice of appeal must be made in writing and submitted to Sotero Muniz, Regional Forester, Southwestern Region, USDA Forest Service, 517 Gold Avenue SW., Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102, within 45 days from the date of this decision. A statement of reasons to support the appeal and any request for oral presentation must be filed within the 45 day period for filing a notice of appeal.

/s/ Sotero Muniz  
SOTERO MUNIZ  
Regional Forester

September 4, 1987  
Date